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Going Global: Transnational perspectives on globalization, language, and education.

by Leslie Seawright (ed)

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014

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The English language has fast become the language of the world and many countries, eager to train citizens to be competitive in the global market, are including English language in the school curriculum at various levels of the education system. This trend, together with technological advancements in communication and travel, have also facilitated access to 'news, other languages, religions, beliefs, customs, values, systems of government, and cultures' (Seawright 2014, p. i). While such developments might be seen as essentially vital for the growth of a cohesive global society, they no doubt raise several questions particularly in relation to the power dynamics of social systems around the world. In this regard, Seawright's edited collection explores a wide range of questions and issues surrounding language, education and culture in a globalised world and presents fresh insights into understanding the multifaceted forces driving global trends in different areas of studies, especially in educational settings. The 12 thought-provoking chapters in this book attempt, with considerable success, to unravel the complex inter-relationship between globalisation, language, culture, identity and education. The book presents a compelling picture of what happens at the interface between global ideas and local practices, and addresses the forces that might impact on, or be impacted upon by, the content and process of school curricula and learning in an immensely multicultural world.

As the editor herself puts it, '[h]onoring students' cultures while trying to prepare them for an uncertain and constantly changing future is the resounding theme' (p. x) developed throughout the 12 chapters of the book. The first part of this collection, entitled 'Critical Perspectives on Language, Culture and Identity', consists of five chapters which, in different ways, examine the theoretical, cultural and ethical implications of the role of English as a *lingua franca* for education as well as for individual and collective identities. In the opening chapter, Eslami, Wright and Sonnenburg explore the economic, socio-political and educational ramifications of the adoption of English in many countries around the world. Questioning the value of native-like English (and by extension, native speaker teachers) in international communication and education, they conclude that more and more, people are making their own decisions about what variety of English they will speak, based on their sense of identity and influenced by local accents. While this may not be a new issue, the emphasis on the place of ethics in discussions about the spread of English offers useful insights which are picked up in the second chapter: 'Globalisation and Multiculturalism: a Linguistic Perspective' by Vivek Dwivedi. This chapter describes the ability of language to lend identity while at the same time enforcing ideological oppression of groups, and argues for an explicit recognition of the ethical and socio-political role of English in a globalised world.

Chapters three and four (by Benabed and Adjei respectively) resonate with my own experiences of schooling through the medium of English in a postcolonial context where the discourses of globalisation and internationalisation are still largely driven by developments in the West rather than by local realities. Adjei's chapter suggests ways in which the gains of 'internationalisation' can be maximised taking account of the unique contexts of African institutions. Benabed, on her part,

bases her study on the work of Wole Soyinka, Africa's first Nobel Laureate in Literature, to show how the hegemony of English language is being dismantled in postcolonial literary texts and how New Englishes are being 'created, adopted and adapted to better serve and represent cultural identity and needs'. The issue of identity is further developed in Alamrani's chapter (chapter 5) with an illustration of how Arab students in a western university navigate their cultural and religious identities in an environment where their cultural identities are often conflicted and questioned by the larger social context and classroom performance.

The second part of the book, entitled 'In the Classroom: Globalisation and Education' consists of seven chapters which develop, in different ways and within different pedagogical contexts, the themes expounded in the first part. Key pedagogic issues developed in this part include not only the place and role of linguistic features such as code-switching in mediating learning, but also the role of classroom pedagogies in co-constructing identity formation, gender roles, cultural adaptations, intercultural competencies and developing critical thinking. I was particularly drawn into the narrative and logic of the last chapter, in which Rudd and Hodges explore cultural interpretations of what counts as plagiarism in academic writing – arguing as they do for the need for institutions and instructors to engage in a dialogue with non-native students on the interplay between ethos and competing academic notions of learning, sharing and writing. The overarching message of the chapters in this part seems to be that current discourses of globalisation need to be reconfigured to take on board local linguistic and cultural challenges and affordances; a globalised world can no longer be assumed to mean people from all parts of the globe readjusting to patterns of life imposed by a few economically and politically powerful nations.

For anyone interested in expanding their knowledge and understanding of the ever growing complexities that language, culture and globalisation bring to the field of education, this is probably the book to start with. The case studies presented here offer a wide range of perspectives from authors and studies representing 12 countries from North and West Africa, East and West Europe, South Asia, North America and the Middle East. These authors and the perspectives they bring to the subject are indeed as multicultural and multi-faceted as the title of the book suggests.